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Amnesty International

EAST TIMOR FACT SHEET

Indonesia and East Timor: Background

After the overthrow of the Caetano regime in Lisbon in 1974, the new Portugese government acknowledged the right to self-determination, including independence, of the colonial territories under its administration. Following that, organized political movements emerged in East Timor. On 7 December 1975, Indonesian troops landed in the East Timorese capital of Dili. Ten days later, the pro-Indonesian parties declared the establishment of a "Provisional Government of East Timor." Subsequently, in May 1976, the "Provisional Government" held elections in areas under its control for a "Regional Popular Assembly" which called for East Timor's integration with Indonesia.

Human Rights Situation in East Timor: Cases

About 100 people were killed and over 100 wounded in November 1991 when troops opened fire on a peaceful procession at the Sta. Cruz cemetery in Dili, East Timor's capital. Some were shot while attempting to flee and others were beaten and stabbed.

While 13 civillians involved in peaceful protest during and after the Sta. Cruz massacre were sentenced to terms of up to life imprisonment in 1992, the 10 police and military officers tried in connection with these events received sentences from just 8 to 18 months for disciplinary offenses. Moreover, the higher-ranking military officers, who were ultimately responsible for the actions of their troops, have not been brought to justice and there is no indication that they will be.

In the two years since the Sta. Cruz Massacre, at least 400 East Timorese have been held without charge for periods

ranging from a few days to several months. Many have been denied access to their relatives, lawyers, and to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Some have also been required to undergo "political guidance" while in military custody and to swear oaths of allegiance to the Indonesian government as a condition of their release. The conditions of detention in East Timor have left detainees vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment by police and military forces; and despite claims to the contrary by the Indonesian authorities, torture continues to be practiced.

Among the East Timorese recently sentenced to long prison terms in unfair trials are several who had neither used nor advocated violence. They include a number of young men tried for taking part in the procession to the Sta. Cruz cemetery, and others tried for organizing a peaceful demonstration in Jakarta to protest against the massacre one week later. Comments made by the judges and prosecutors in some of these trials indicate that they were punished principally because the Sta. Cruz massacre had caused the Indonesian government international embarassment. For example, in his verdict in the trial of *Fernando Araujo*, sentenced to 9 years for subversion in 1992, the judge said that the defendant was guilty of "undermining the Indonesian government and disgracing the nation in the eyes of the international community", because he had sent information about human rights violations to the ICRC and to Amnesty International.

East Timorese continue to face the problem of torture. In a letter to a friend, dated 14 January 1994, Bishop Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo of Dili, wrote:

With this letter I would like to let you know that torture continues in East Timor. On 4 January 1994 in Dili, the military were waiting for a young man named Salvador Sarmento, who is a student at the Pastoral Institute. When he left the classroom they took him, stuck him in a military vehicle and took him to a place where he was kicked, beaten, tortured until he was almost dead. Then they forced his parents, who are illiterate, to declare that they had seen their son participate in subversive meetings. With these kinds of injustices, they want to force a declaration that Father Sancho Amaral is a priest who is against Indonesia.